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Laurence Housman Papers
1898-2007

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

Laurence Housman (1865-1959), writer and artist, was the fourth son of the seven children of Edward Housman (1831-1894), solicitor of Perry Hall and the Clock House, Bromsgrove and his wife Sarah Jane Williams (1828-1871) of Woodchester, Gloucestershire. From 1924 Laurence resided in Street, Somerset, with his sister Clemence Housman (1861-1955), wood engraver and novelist. Classicist and poet A E Housman, best known for *A Shropshire Lad*, was their eldest brother (1859-1936).

Laurence was educated at Bromsgrove School whereas Clemence was home educated and then attended the Bromsgrove School of Art. Following the sudden illness of their father, Laurence and Clemence moved to London in 1883 where they both attended Kennington Art School. Clemence trained here as a wood engraver and later worked for illustrated papers, supporting Laurence when he moved onto South Kensington Art School and was also pursuing interests in writing. Clemence was the first to publish, engraving her novel *The Were-Wolf* (1896) which was illustrated by Laurence. Laurence published his first work the following year and later turned to drama. Both siblings developed strong interests in women's suffrage from 1908. Laurence became a high-profile activist, speaker and commentator, and Clemence co-founded and ran the Suffrage Atelier, made banners, raised funds for the Women's Social and Political Union and was briefly imprisoned in 1911.

Laurence and Clemence became friends of Roger Clark (1871-1961) and his wife Sarah Bancroft Clark (1877-1973), probably through their shared interests in the suffrage cause, with their friendship intensifying during World War One. The Housmans planned to leave London at this time and initially moved to New Milton, Hampshire, in a bid to move permanently to the countryside. The Clarks became their patrons and built the house Longmeadow, Burleigh Lane, as a permanent residence for the siblings in 1924, close to their own home Whitenights on the southern edge of Street. Laurence had discussed the idea of moving to Street as early as 1918, although Clemence was initially less keen on relocating to Somerset. Roger bought the land from his close neighbour brother-in-law S T Clothier (1857-1933), who designed and built the house with its views of Glastonbury Tor. The Housmans became came to know many of Roger and Sarah's wide extended Clark family. In particular, Roger's cousin Reginald Reynolds (1905-1958), married to Ethel Mannin (1900-1984), was a keen supporter of both Laurence and Clemence's work and was appointed Laurence's literary executor, although he predeceased Laurence.

The Housmans engaged in the social and cultural life of Street. Laurence's cycle of plays based on the life of St Francis were performed regularly at the Glastonbury Festival, where Roger was a keen patron and supporter from its beginnings in 1913. Laurence became involved in the organisation of the festival until it closed in 1926, partly following Rutland Boughton's withdrawal from the project in the 1920s. Laurence became a Quaker in 1951. Following Clemence's death after a long illness in 1955, Laurence became increasingly dependent on Roger and Sarah Clark. He died in Butleigh Hospital in 1959 and is buried at Street Meeting House.

EXTENT

4 boxes

ARCHIVAL HISTORY

This collection was deposited at Street Library in 1965. It was subsequently deposited at the Alfred Gillett Trust in Dec 2013 by the Trustees of Street Library.

SYSTEM OF ARRANGEMENT

The collection is currently arranged as per bound folder inherited from the Library.

DESCRIPTION

This collection includes: Autograph letters to Laurence Housman, 1898-1939, incl. George Bernard Shaw, Max Beerbohm, Thomas Chesterton, Arthur Quiller-Couch, John Masefield, E H Shepard, Charles Trevelyan, Oscar Wilde, A E Housman.

Letters, Laurence Housman to Clemence Housman, 1913-1930; Laurence Housman to Roger Clark, 1908-1932; Laurence Housman to Sarah Bancroft Clark, 1912-1916; Laurence Housman to Roger and Sarah Clark, 1920-1932, 1954, 1959

Longmeadow plans, c 1919; Photograph album, play *Victoria Regina*, 1937; Obituary newscuttings, 1959; Correspondence relating to research enquiries and archive, 1966-1985; Draft catalogues, c 1965; Papers relating to the Housman Society, 1970s-1980s

ACCESS CONDITIONS

Access to the collection is by advance appointment only. Access to some items may be restricted due to Data Protection or other restrictions. Check with the Archivist.

REPRODUCTION CONDITIONS

Usual Alfred Gillett Trust regulations apply. Permission from the Trust and/or owner of a collection is usually required before publication. Copying of some items may be possible on a case by case basis – please check with the Archivist.

LANGUAGE

English

FINDING AIDS

Accession listed by Julie Mather, Jan 2014.

RELATED UNITS OF DESCRIPTION

Photographs of Laurence and Clemence Housman are available in the family archive of Roger and Sarah Clark (Whitenights Papers, ref. WN).

Laurence Housman's literary papers are held at the University of Austin Texas, the University of Iowa and Bryn Mawr College, USA. His letters are held at a wide variety of repositories in the USA and UK, including Worcestershire Record Office. Correspondence and papers of Clemence Housman are held at Bromsgrove Library.

PUBLICATION NOTE

Elizabeth Oakley. 2009. *Inseparable siblings: a portrait of Clemence and Laurence Housman*. Brewin Books: Studley